

# Gender Role Portrayals in Brazilian and Portuguese Television Advertisements

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to compare gender roles portrayed in television advertisements at a comparable time in Portugal and Brazil on the basis of Hofstede's masculinity dimension. This research reports on two studies conducted with similar methodologies, examining the way males and females are depicted on television (TV). One was performed in Portugal, where 253 TV commercials were content analyzed. The other was performed in Brazil where 169 TV commercials were content analyzed. This research constitutes the first endeavor to compare gender role portrayals in television advertisements between Brazil and Portugal. Both studies were based on the coding scheme devised by McArthur and Resko. In agreement with predictions a greater proportion of Portuguese advertisements feature women as central figures than Brazilian advertisements. However, in Portugal, nine of the ten content categories showed a significant gender role association, whereas in Brazil, six of the ten content categories showed a significant gender role association. Therefore, contrary to expectations, it was found that Portuguese advertisements did not show less significant differences in the ten categories examined than Brazilian advertisements. Limitations of this research are considered.

**Keywords:** Gender; Gender roles; Television advertisements; Brazil; Portugal

## Introduction

Gender portrayals in advertising represent a topic of large research interest. A variety of factors contributed to this interest "the most important of which are that marketers use gender as a primary segmentation variable and that social scientists use advertisements to examine gender stereotyping in the media" [1]. There continues to be sustained interest in this topic [2]. However, Furnham and Paltzer [3] have noted that "most studies are descriptive rather than hypothesis testing. What the research area still lacks is ... theoretical frameworks to make specific predictions about cultural or temporal differences". In this research we will use the masculinity dimension, a gender-related cultural orientation [4], to predict cross-cultural gender role portrayals.

According to Hofstede [4] masculinity "stands for a preference for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success", whereas femininity "stands for a preference for relationships, modesty, caring for the weak, and the quality of life. In a masculine society, even the women prefer assertiveness (at least in men); in a feminine society, even the men prefer modesty". Thus, gender role differentiation between females and males should be narrower in feminine countries than in masculine countries. Japan was shown to be the most masculine country, whereas Sweden was the most feminine nation among the 53 countries examined. This dimension has presented quite stability over time [5]. Wiles et al. [6] argued that gender role orientation in culture's advertising could be categorized under Hofstede's masculinity index. Gender role portrayals have been compared in a feminine country (Turkey), with three masculine nations (Mexico, United States, and Australia) according to the Hofstede's ordering of nations [7]. As predicted, in Turkey were found fewer differences in gender role portrayals than in Mexico, United States and Australia. An and Kim [8] point out that "previous literature provides some empirical evidence for the influence of masculinity/femininity value orientation on the portrayals of gender roles in advertising across cultures".

The purpose of this research is to compare gender portrayal in television advertisements in two Portuguese language countries,

Portugal and Brazil, on the basis of Hofstede's masculinity dimension. These countries differ in their level of masculinity, allowing to test whether gender role differentiation is more prevailing in masculine nations than in feminine nations. Portugal is closer to the feminine pole of the continuum (i.e., a score of 29), whereas Brazil is more masculine (i.e., a score of 49) than Portugal [9]. Few studies have been conducted on gender stereotyping in TV advertisements in languages other than English, and in particular, South America has broadly been neglected [2,10,11]. In both countries were chosen channels available to the entire TV owning population with advertisements, as opposed to digital channels with a more limited audience.

Two studies have been carried out in Portugal extending back over the two last decades [12,13]. Neto and Pinto [12] found substantial different portrayals of males and females in a sample of Portuguese TV advertisements recorded in 1996, as well as the traditional gender role stereotypes reported in studies performed in Western nations [10]. It is interesting to observe, however, that gender stereotyping appears to be much less prevalent in children's commercials [14] and in radio commercials [15].

Neto and Silva [13] have examined whether changes have occurred in the portrayal of gender in television commercials 7 years apart (1996 and 2003) and if so, to characterize this shift. Overall, more women were shown in TV advertisements as central figures in 2003 (40.8%), as compared to 1996 (32.9%). There were 4 distinct groups of

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advertisements that emerged, 2 of them characterizing a predominantly male central figure (narrator and expert) and the other two (visual no arguments, home setting) characterizing a female central figure. The only type that experienced a significant increase between 1996 and 2003 was the narrator type (from 8.8% to 21.6%). Given these results the authors observed that “the advertisement types showed a persistent stereotyping in gender role portrayals, but it may be concluded that changes occurring in Portuguese television commercials are heading for less traditional gender-role portrayals” [13].

Acevedo et al. [16] examined female roles portrayed in Brazilian advertisements which got an award in international and national festivals from 1973 to 2000. A total of ninety five pieces were selected. The coding categories were based mainly on Goffman's [17] work. The authors concluded that “our results reveal portrayals (the stereotyped and idealized ones) which are impregnated by prejudice against women and insinuate a hidden trace of male domination” [16].

Paek et al. [18] examined gender role portrayals in television advertisements in seven countries: Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, South Korea, Thailand, and United States. They used coding categories based mainly on Gilly et al. [1]: prominent character gender, prominent occupation and gender of voiceover. A total of 177 adverts from Brazil were analyzed in which the prominent character gender and gender voiceover were predominantly male.

Thus both studies converge to point to a persistence of traditional gender role portrayals in Brazilian TV commercials, although no study has used the coding scheme of McArthur and Resko [19]. At our knowledge this investigation is the first to look at gender role portrayals in Brazilian television commercials using McArthur and Resko's framework which will allow in future research to compare the results with studies conducted over the five continents [2,9]. This method has been used very closely in more than fifty studies about gender portrayals in commercials and these “studies have found the content analytic categories meaningful and clear enough to be used in different countries” [20].

Although little psychological research has been carried out on cultural differences and similarities between the Brazil and Portugal, most of them point out to a portrayal of similarity. For example, similar knowledge of gender stereotypes was found in both countries among children [21], as well as high similarity in Portuguese and Brazilian gender stereotypes at the adult level [22]. Relatively to love styles no cross-cultural differences appeared between Brazilian and Portuguese participants [23]. With regards to the two dimensions of social axioms (that is, general beliefs) Brazil and Portugal were low in Dynamic Externality (that is, the belief that life events are extremely determined but can nevertheless be altered to some extent by people's behaviors) and Societal Cynicism (that is, a negative view of human nature) [24]. In a recent research has been found that both sex differences and cultural differences shaped people's preferences in mates [25].

However, sex effects were greater than culture effects, in contrast to the usual picture which shows that the effects of culture on mate preferences are potentially generally greater than those of sex differences [26]. One possible explanation for those findings is that both countries share many cultural similarities.

Therefore, to a larger extent Brazil and Portugal seem to be more similar than different at the cultural level. However, they do differ on the Hofstede [4] cultural dimension of masculinity. Given the scores of the two countries on the masculinity dimension, Brazil may be more traditional than Portugal, and this difference may be mirrored in TV

advertisements. Based on the above literature the following hypotheses were tested:

**Hypothesis 1:** It is hypothesized that in both countries at a comparable time would be found traditional gender role portrayals in TV advertisements.

However, overall, given the rank of both countries in the masculinity dimension, gender stereotyping advertisements will be more pronounced in Brazil than in Portugal. Therefore it is predicted that:

**Hypothesis 2:** Women will be portrayed more often as central figures in TV advertisements in Portugal than in Brazil owing to the rank of both countries in the masculinity dimension.

**Hypothesis 3:** It is expected to find less significant differences in gender role portrayals in the ten categories examined (mode of presentation, basis for credibility, role, location, age, arguments for the product, rewards for using the product, product type advertised, background, and end comment) in Portuguese advertisements than in Brazilian commercials.

## Study 1: Portugal

The first study was carried out in Portugal.

## Method

### Sample of advertisements

As in previous studies conducted in this country [12,13], the sample of Portuguese TV commercials was selected by recording four hours of prime-time television every evening from 7.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. during every day for one week in the beginning of June 2010. The sample comprised all advertisements broadcasted on three Portuguese stations, one public channel (RTP1) and two private channels (SIC and TVI); repeated advertisements were excluded, as well as commercials depicting children, animals, cartoon figures, or fantasy characters as central figures, or those in which a central figure was not readily identifiable. Therefore the central figure is defined as adults involved in a verbal or non-verbal interaction that was the central focus of the advertisement. The final sample included 253 independent advertisements for coding. In all of the “visually” portrayed commercials, the central figure was White.

### Coding procedure

Content analysis was used to examine the advertisements [27]. The coding procedure was the same used on Neto and Silva [13], following that of Furnham and Imadzu [28], Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage [29], and McArthur and Resko [19].

Ten attributes were coded:

**Mode of presentation:** The central figure was classified into one of three manners in which it appeared during the commercial: “voice-over”, “visual speaking” and “visual not speaking”.

**Credibility basis:** The central figure was depicted as “user” of the product and “authority/other” (whenever the central figure is a source of information and not necessarily a user of the product, or neither).

**Role:** Four categories according to the central figure being a “dependent”(including parent, spouse, partner, gender object, home maker), an “interviewer/narrator” (including celebrity), a “professional” or “other” (including worker).

**Location:** Location was divided into four categories: at “home”, at “work”, during “leisure” activities, and “other/unknown”.

**Age:** The central figure’s age was classified in three broad age groups: “young” (under 30 years); “middle aged”(30-60), or “old” (over 60).

**Argument:** The argument suggested by the central figure was classified into three categories: “fact”, “opinion”, or as “none”.

**Reward type:** The reward suggested by the central figure in terms of the product being advertised was defined as “social approval”, “self-enhancement”, “practical”, “pleasure”, or “other”. The latter two categories were combined before analysis.

**Product type:** The product being advertised was categorized into one of six product types: “Body”, “home”, “food”, “audio/sports”, “electronics” and “other” were the categories used to describe the type of product being advertised.

**Background:** The background against which the central figure was shown was coded: “mostly female”, “mostly male”, “mixed”, “mostly children”, and “no others”.

**End Comment:** An end comment was coded as “present” whenever the central figure made a final brief remark, such as a sentence or phrase delivering a slogan, and otherwise was coded “absent”.

## Coding reliability

A young white Portuguese-speaking woman classified the sample elements blinded to the reliability check. To ensure reliability, 20% of the advertisements were classified by a trained male coder of similar background and education to the first coder, as is usual in these investigations [20]. This coder classified commercials independently and blinded to the first classification. Reliability was assessed as the percentage of agreement between the two coders [30]. There was complete agreement (100%) on the central character of each advertisement and on central character gender (for this test all advertisements were watched and classified independently by the two coders). The average percentage of agreement among coders was 98% for “mode of presentation”, 92% for “credibility”, 92% for “role”, 94% for “location”, 90% for “age”, 96% for “argument”, 90% for “reward type”, 96% for “product type”, 96% for “background”, and 98% for “end comment”, making a mean of 94%. Differences between coders in the coding of commercials were solved by further discussion. This method has been utilized by nearly other investigations in this field [2].

## Results

As in prior investigations chi-squares tests were performed to determine any significant gender difference within each coding category [12,19,31]. Although the N for certain cells are very uneven, they are satisfactory for a chi-square analysis (Table 1). 56.5% of central figures were men (n=143) and 43.5% were women (n=110). There was a significant difference in the distribution of the gender of central figures in advertisements, ( $\chi^2=4.30$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), with more men shown as central figures than women.

### Mode of presentation

The overall analysis displayed a significant association between the gender of central figure and the mode of presentation ( $\chi^2=25.4$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Men were more likely to be used as voiceovers (63.6%) in the advertisements than were women (34.5%), while women were depicted more visually than were men.

Attribute	Males (n=143)	Females (n=110)	X <sup>2</sup>
	%	%	
Mode			
Voice-over	63.6	34.5	25.04***
Visual speaking	12.6	34.5	
Visual not speaking	23.8	30.9	
Credibility			
User	21.7	53.6	27.71***
Authority/other <sup>a</sup>	78.3	46.4	
Role			
Dependent	7.0	32.7	32.80***
Interviewer	74.1	50.0	
Professional	9.8	3.6	
Other	9.1	13.6	
Location			
Home	12.6	21.7	22.41***
Occupation	18.9	13.8	
Leisure	32.9	34.4	
Other/unknown	35.7	30.9	
Age			
Young	33.6	63.6	22.66***
Middle aged	62.2	34.5	
Old	4.2	1.8	
Argument			
Factual	52.4	34.5	9.50**
Opinion	26.6	30.0	
None	21.0	35.5	
Reward type			
Social approval	5.6	20.9	32.44***
Self-enhancement	11.9	30.0	
Practical	37.8	27.7	
Pleasure/other <sup>b</sup>	44.7	26.4	
Product type			
Body	18.9	49.1	48.80***
Home	8.4	6.4	
Food	19.6	30.9	
Auto/sport <sup>c</sup>	11.9	3.6	
Electronics	20.3	6.4	
Other	21.0	3.6	
Background			
Mostly female	7.7	50.0	76.20***
Mostly male	29.4	4.5	
Mixed	35.7	31.8	
Mostly children	2.8	6.4	
None	24.5	7.3	
Comment			
Present	34.3	23.6	0.07
Absent	65.7	76.4	

<sup>a</sup>The categories “authority” and “other” were combined for analysis because of low numbers in this last category <sup>b</sup> Pleasure and related positive rewards. <sup>c</sup> Motor cars and sport products combined. \* $p<0.05$ ; \*\* $p<0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p<0.001$ .

**Table 1:** Percentage of male and female characters depicted in all advertisements by attribute coding category in Portugal.

### Credibility basis

Men and women differed significantly in this category, ( $\chi^2=27.71$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), with higher rates of male authority (78.3%), while females were more commonly users (53.6%).

### Role

Role also differed significantly between men and women, ( $\chi^2=32.80$ ,

$df=3$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), with men being more often in the interviewer/professional roles, while women were more likely depicted in a dependent role.

### Location

Location differed significantly between men and women, ( $\chi^2=22.41$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), with more women portrayed at home than men, while men were more often portrayed at occupation.

### Age

A  $2 \times 3$  (gender  $\times$  age) analysis showed that the age groups distribution differed significantly by the gender of central figures, ( $\chi^2=22.66$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). 63.6% of female central figures were depicted in the young group, while only 33.6% of males fell into the same age group. Male figures were more likely to be middle-aged (62.2%) than females (34.5%).

### Argument

There was a significant difference in the argument that males and females provided, ( $\chi^2=9.50$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Males were more likely than females to present factual arguments, while females were more likely not to make an argument.

### Reward type

Reward types differed also significantly between men and women, ( $\chi^2=32.44$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Women were more often associated with products that emphasized self-enhancement and social enhancement. Men were more likely to advertise products that emphasized practical or pleasure rewards.

### Product type

Overall chi square was found to be significant for product types, ( $\chi^2=48.80$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Women were more likely than men to be depicted in commercials for body and food products. Men were more often associated with auto, sports products, and practical electronics.

### Background

Background also differed significantly between male and female central figures, ( $\chi^2=76.20$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Women were portrayed more frequently in their own gender background. There were similar numbers of mixed background. Men were more likely to be depicted in no background (no other human beings were shown in the advertisements) than women.

### End comment

Finally, the chi square was not significant for end comment, ( $\chi^2=3.67$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), suggesting that both genders of central figures were equally likely to provide an end comment.

### Discussion

It was hypothesized that in Portugal, given past research, would be found predominantly traditional gender role stereotyping in TV commercials. The results of the current study suggest that traditional gender portrayals persist in television advertisements in Portugal, a feminine country. Further, they are broadly in line with two other Portuguese studies in which were found significant differences on all 10 categories in 1996 [12] as well as in 2010 [13].

Given the ideological and societal pressures concerning the equality of gender roles in the last decades, it could be expected that women

would have a larger representation in television commercials in 2010. Indeed, the proportion of women portrayed as central figures enhanced from 32.9% in 1996 to 40.8% in 2003 and to 43.5% in 2010. Though the proportion of women as central figures has augmented since 1996, there is still a disparity relatively to the data of the last census occurred in 2011 in Portugal [32], as the Portuguese population was constituted by a total of 10 562 178 persons, comprising 5 046 600 men (47.8%) and 5 515 578 (52.2%) women. Therefore, current results seem to confirm the disparity still existing in the representation of men and women as central figures in the Portuguese commercials.

The findings of the current investigation exhibited significant differences between the two genders in all categories analyzed, except in one, end comment. Men were more often used as voiceovers, depicted as authorities, and portrayed as professionals. Women were more often presented visually, and in dependent roles, such as parent, spouse, and home maker. Women were more likely to be depicted in home settings, and men were more likely to be portrayed in work contexts. Women were portrayed as younger than men, supporting the notion that “older women are less appealing to audiences compared with older men” [20]. Men were most often associated with factual argument and women were more often associated with no argument.

Women tended to be associated with social approval, self-enhancement, body and food products, whereas men were more often associated with practical and pleasurable rewards, auto-sports, and electronic items. Men were more often shown in a male background and no background, and women were more often shown in a female background. Finally, concerning end comments no significant differences appeared, both genders being equally likely to make end comments.

In sum, these findings point to a persistence of traditional gender role portrayals in Portuguese TV commercials in 2010. Furnham and Mak [10] performed an analysis of 14 studies on gender roles in advertisements and they found that consistently across time and countries a picture which reassembles greatly to that presented in this study. Therefore current results are in line with the pattern of findings on TV advertisements in other Western countries. Despite legislative and societal efforts undertaken to promote gender equality, TV advertisements still evidenced a highly stereotypical portrayal of women and men.

### Study 2: Brazil

The second study was carried out in Brazil.

### Sample of advertisements

Sample of TV advertisements were selected from TV Globo, private and the most popular (the most broadly watched) Brazilian television channel. Advertisements were recorded between 8 and 10 p.m. during every day for one week in April 2010. As in study 1, repeated commercials were not considered in the final sample, as well as commercials depicting central figures with children, cartoon figures, fantasy characters, or unidentifiable central figures. The final sample contained 169 independent advertisements for coding. In the “visually” portrayed advertisements, 82.9% of the central figures were White, 14.5% Black, and 2.6% Oriental.

### Coding procedure

It was identical to that of study 1.



## Coding reliability

It was also identical to that of study 1. There was complete agreement (100%) on the central figure of each commercial and on central figure gender (for this test all commercials were watched and classified independently by the two coders). The average percentage of agreement among coders was 97% for "mode of presentation", 91% for "credibility", 91% for "role", 94% for "location", 91% for "age", 94% for "argument", 94% for "reward type", 91% for "product type", 94% for "background", and 97% for "end comment", making a mean of 93%. Differences between coders were solved by further discussion.

## Results

As in the previous study the results of each the categories rated are presented in terms of their significance utilizing also a chi square test (Table 2). 79.1% of central figures were men (n=135) and 20.9% were women (n=34). The overall analysis showed a significant chi square for central figures, ( $\chi^2=60.36$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), with more men shown as central figures than women.

It was expected a significant difference in the frequency of central figures between Brazil and Portugal. Out of a total of 169 Brazilian advertisements, 34 (20.9%) portrayed women as central figures, whereas 110 (43.5%) out of a total of 253 Portuguese sample commercials portrayed women as central figures. This difference was statistically significant, ( $\chi^2=24.59$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

## Mode of presentation

Males and females differed significantly in the mode of presentation, ( $\chi^2=23.23$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Males were more likely to be used as voiceovers in the advertisements than were females, while females were depicted more visually than were males.

## Credibility basis

Men and women differed significantly in this category, ( $\chi^2=9.04$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), with higher rates of male authority (90.4%), while females were more commonly users (29.4%).

## Role

Role differed significantly between men and women, ( $\chi^2=34.56$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), with men being more often in the interviewer role, while women were more likely depicted in dependent and professional roles.

## Location

No effect was found for location, ( $\chi^2=1.08$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), suggesting that both genders were equally likely to be depicted in the location settings.

## Age

The chi square was not significant for age groups, ( $\chi^2=2.13$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), even though there is still a large proportion of "young" central figures (52.9%).

## Argument

There was no significant difference in the argument that males and females made, ( $\chi^2=3.83$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

## Reward type

There was an overall significant chi square for reward type, ( $\chi^2=13.89$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p>0.01$ ). Women were more often associated with

Attribute	Males (n=143)	Females (n=110)	X <sup>2</sup>
	%	%	
Mode			
Voice-over	63.7	17.6	23.23***
Visual speaking	31.1	70.6	
Visual not speaking	5.2	11.8	
Credibility			
User	9.6	29.4	9.04**
Authority/other <sup>a</sup>	90.4	70.6	
Role			
Dependent	3.0	32.4	34.56***
Interviewer	80.7	41.2	
Professional	10.4	20.6	
Other	5.9	5.9	
Location			
Home	14.1	14.7	0.78
Occupation	14.1	17.6	
Leisure	35.6	26.5	
Other/unknown	36.3	41.2	
Age			
Young	39.3	52.9	0.34
Middle aged	51.9	41.2	
Old	8.9	5.9	
Argument			
Factual	45.9	29.4	0.15
Opinion	40.7	47.1	
None	13.3	23.5	
Reward type			
Social approval	5.2	20.6	13.89**
Self-enhancement	5.2	14.7	
Practical	56.3	47.1	
Pleasure/other <sup>b</sup>	33.3	17.6	
Product type			
Body	11.9	35.3	14.67*
Home	8.4	6.4	
Food	19.6	30.9	
Auto/sport <sup>c</sup>	11.9	3.6	
Electronics	20.3	6.4	
Other	21.0	3.6	
Background			
Mostly female	7.7	50.0	76.20***
Mostly male	29.4	4.5	
Mixed	35.7	31.8	
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<sup>a</sup>The categories "authority" and "other" were combined for analysis because of low numbers in this last category <sup>b</sup> Pleasure and related positive rewards. <sup>c</sup> Motor cars and sport products combined.

**Table 2:** Percentage of male and female characters depicted in all advertisements by attribute coding category in Brazil.

products that emphasized self-enhancement and social enhancement. Men were more likely to advertise products that emphasized practical or pleasure rewards.

## Product type

Overall chi square was found to be significant for product types, ( $\chi^2=14.67$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Women were more likely to be portrayed in

advertisements for body products than men. Men were more often associated with auto, sports products, as well as practical electronics.

## Background

Background differed significantly between female and male central figures, ( $\chi^2=69.83$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Both men and women were more likely to be depicted in their own gender background, and men were depicted more frequently in no background.

## End comment

Finally, the chi square was not significant for end comment, ( $\chi^2=0.52$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

## Discussion

It was hypothesized that in Brazil would be found predominantly traditional gender role stereotyping in television advertisements. The findings suggest that traditional gender portrayals persist in television advertisements in Brazil, an intermediate masculine country. This is in agreement with our expectations. In particular, there was a great disparity in the gender of central figures. There were about five times more male central figures than female central figures. Notwithstanding, this inequality, gender differences were not found in all the categories examined. Out of ten categories, 6 significant differences emerged.

Men were more likely to be utilized as voiceovers, portrayed as authorities, and depicted as interviewers. Women were more often shown visually, depicted as users, and in dependent work. However, it was found against the traditional gender-role stereotyping that women were most often associated with a professional role than men. This may reflect “the increasing frequency of women focusing in their careers” [20]. Women were more often associated with social approval, self-enhancement, and body products and men were more often associated with practicality, pleasure, auto-sports and electronics. Women were more often portrayed in a female background, and men were more often shown in a male background. When the findings were examined in terms of location, age, argument, and end comment no significant differences were found which seems to indicate a narrowing in gender difference stereotypes. The results concerning the context of location showed that women and men were equally likely to be depicted in domestic and work contexts. This suggests that women are depicted at odds the “homemaker stereotype” with the “modern working woman” [20].

A further deviation from previous findings was the absence of significant differences in the group ages of men and women, whereas in previous research females were often more likely to be younger [2]. Another absence of significant differences concerns the factual or opinion-based arguments presented by males or females. This finding suggests “a trend of perceived equality in the work of men and women’s arguments” [20]. In sum, the current study demonstrates that there was a predominance of traditional gender roles portrayed in Brazilian TV advertisements, but portrayals are currently becoming less stereotyped emphasizing modern roles for females.

## General Discussion and Conclusion

This research described two studies performed at about the same time in Brazil and Portugal. This research compared gender portrayals in television advertisements between the two countries based on Hofstede’s masculinity index, which refers Portugal as a feminine country and Brazil as an intermediate masculine country. There is consensus of the two studies that there is unequal gender representation in commercials. As hypothesized (H1), the gender role portrayals

presented in Portuguese and Brazilian TV advertisements reflected predominantly traditional roles. These results are in agreement with the findings of the majority of most proceeding research with TV advertisements from other nations [2,10,11]. The results showed that the hypothesis concerning proportion of the gender of central figures (H2) in commercials was supported. The results indicated that Portuguese commercials more frequently depicted feminine central figures than Brazilian commercials. This result supports the idea that a country’s gender, as ranked by Hofstede’s masculinity index, can be linked to the frequency of depictions of male and female central figures. A possible explanation for this finding is the association between gender of central figures in commercials and “country gender” [1].

We expected to find less significant differences in gender role portrayals in Portuguese advertisements than in Brazilian advertisements (H3). Overall, a feminine country, Portugal, exhibited more significant differences in the categories examined by gender of central figure than an intermediate country, Brazil. Out of ten categories, Portugal presented 9 significant differences, and Brazil depicted 6 significant differences. In Brazil differences in location, age, argument, and end comment were all non-significant. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

In both countries men provided voice-overs more frequently than women, while women were used more visually, supporting previous findings [2]. This places males in position of authority reinforcing the idea that “men are more credible, convincing, and knowledgeable” [33]. Following previous research [20], men were shown as authority figures more often than women, who tended to be shown as users more frequently. In both countries women were more likely to be portrayed as users of the product advertised and men more likely to be depicted as authorities. This is a very general finding across countries [2].

Past investigation has examined the roles depicted by characters in TV advertisements. Multiple studies have shown that women tend to be portrayed in dependent roles, while men tend to be represented in professional roles [2,34]. Our findings support totally these observations in the Portuguese setting, and partially in the Brazilian setting. First, in both countries women were more likely to be depicted in dependent roles (e.g., spouse, subordinate, and daughters) than men, although women were also more likely to be portrayed more independent than dependent. Second, in Brazil women were more frequently portrayed professional experts than men. This was not observed in the Portuguese sample.

Location concerns the physical environment in which the commercial is shot, such as home, work, outside cultivating leisure activities, etc. In Brazil there were not significant differences, while in Portugal more females were presented in private residence settings (21.6 vs. 12.6%). However, both males and females were equally presented in leisure settings (around a third of advertisements). Most central figures in both countries were assigned to two age groups: young and middle aged. In the Portuguese sample there were more middle aged males than females (66.4 vs. 36.3%), whereas in Brazil there was not a significant difference in the age of males and females. However, in both studies the age-group proportions were very unbalanced, with older adults comprising 3.2% in Portugal and 8.3% in Brazil. Clearly seniority is largely ignored at odds with the trend of aging populations. In Brazil a lack of significant difference was also found within the arguments for product as well. In Portugal men were more likely to make factual-based arguments than women. The category reward types refers to rewards obtained from purchasing a brand. In both countries women were more likely to be depicted in social/self-enhancement

than men, whereas men were more likely to be portrayed in practical and pleasurable rewards.

Women have been more likely to advertise body products than men across countries [3]. Body products were shown about three times as much with women as with men in Brazil and Portugal. In both countries the most noticeable gender difference in product type advertised with central figures as either male or female appeared in the “body” products. This is consonant with results observed across continents [2]. In Portugal women were more likely to advertise food products than men (30.9 vs. 19.3%), while in Brazil men and women were equally depicted with food products. In both countries males and females were just as likely to advertise home products and males were more likely to advertise auto/sport and electronic products than females.

The background concerns the social and physical context of the commercial. Both genders tended to be portrayed against background characters that were their own gender but women were more likely to be shown against women than vice men in Brazil as well as in Portugal. Note also that around a quarter of male central characters were shown with anyone in background. With mixed background men were more likely to be portrayed in them in Brazil (30.4 vs. 20.6%), while in Portugal around a third of men and women were likely to be depicted with a mixed background. In both nations, there were no significant differences in end comments (i.e., “last words”), although most of the central figures did not provide end comments. This against most of the previous research showing males that made the most end comments, and suggesting a final statement of authority.

Overall, this research validates only partially the use of Hofstede’s masculinity demarcation to explain the difference in the portrayal of female and male central figures in TV advertisements. “A possible explanation is that other forms in each country, such as self-regulation of advertising, also influence gender stereotyping in advertising” [32]. Other research also evidenced some inconsistent findings about the relationship between the extent of gender role portrayals and a nation’s masculinity score [35]. Oderkerken-Schröder et al. [36] compared print advertisements in UK and the Netherlands, and out of 7 hypotheses found support only for two hypotheses: the advertisements in UK depicted women less in a working role and more as sex objects than advertisements in the Netherlands. Milner and Collins [1] utilized Hofstede’s dimension with mixed findings in the analysis of gender role portrayals in television commercials from Japan, Russia, Sweden, and United States. Their findings were inconclusive about the predictions of less gender differences in feminine nations than in masculine nations. A country’s masculinity score alone may not explain the gender role portrayals in commercials.

As with any research, this research has some limitations which suggest directions for future research. First, some other categories could be extended, such as humor and sex. However, this research replicated rather than innovated relatively to the categories used which presents the advantage of providing results likely to be comparable with other investigation across different countries and time periods. It is very relevant to note the observation concerning this issue made by Furnham and Paltzer [2] “It is perhaps rare to see content analytic system and method endure for so long to be replicated so widely particularly as this is expensive research in terms of data gathering and analysis”. Second, the analysis was restricted to one TV station advertising in Brazil, although the sample used was enough large comparatively to those collected in other countries. Furnham and Paltzer [2] refer that generally numbers are around 100-200 non

overlapping commercials. However, there is always the question as to the representativeness of the sample for Brazil as a whole. Third, we have examined gender portrayals in only two countries. Future research should use a broader variety of nations differing in the masculinity dimension to demonstrate a more convincing test of our hypotheses. Fourth, this research is limited to television advertisements only. Future Investigation may include other media to see if gender role portrayals differences are generalizable across different media types. In addition, the effects of depiction of men and women in prime time commercials on viewers remain largely unmeasured in Portugal and Brazil. This aspect needs to be investigated.

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